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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2006

In Today's Papers

All papers: Speaker of the Turkish Parliament Bulent Arinc said on the occasion of National Sovereignty Day (April 23) that there is no regime problem in Turkey, but there is a dispute over who controls the regime. Arinc claimed that some state institutions are resisting reforms. The parliament's functions are being restricted, Arinc charged, citing as an example the exclusion of the parliament from the preparation of the National Security Policy Document, also known as "the secret constitution of Turkey." He said it implied that a secret and antidemocratic body is ruling Turkey. Arinc complained that it has been impossible to eliminate a "problem-causing institution" such as the Higher Education Council (YOK) due to reactions from the elitist and anti-reform groups in Turkey. Referring to the headscarf issue, the Parliament Speaker said secularism needs to be redefined, that the state cannot ban one sector of the society from exercising public rights that should be valid for everyone.

Addressing the parliament the same day, the main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal lashed out at the government for politicizing state cadres, calling for the protection of the republic and secularism. "The fact is that religious exploitation backed by the government continues to prevail, and it has become essential to protect the republic. Democracy cannot be strengthened by destroying the republic," Baykal stressed. The ruling AK Party Deputy Chairman Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat said Arinc's speech was "excellent" and "a real political manifesto." The CHP lawmakers blamed Arinc for creating tensions.

General Ozkok: Turkish Troop Movement in the Southeast Routine

All papers: The Chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS,) General Hilmi Ozkok, said at a reception held in Ankara that

Turkish troop movements on the borders with Iraq and Iran were "routine." On the possibility of cross border incursions into northern Iraq, Ozkok said Turkey would avail itself of its rights if conditions required such a military operation. Ozkok emphasized that the right to hot pursuit of terrorists was determined by the UN Security Council resolutions. Papers continued reporting over the weekend that some 150,000 soldiers are being deployed in southeast Turkey, near the Iraqi border ahead of major anti-terror operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. On the decision to disbar Ferhat Sarikaya, the Van Prosecutor who drafted the Semdinli indictment that charged the Land Forces Commander General Yasar Buyukanit for carrying out illegal military operations in southeast Turkey, Ozkok said the judiciary made a decision through its own free will, and that it is out of the question that the military applied pressure on the judiciary.

President Abbas in Ankara
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others: Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, who arrived in Ankara on a state visit yesterday, said he will discuss what Turkey can do to ease the enormous economic hardships Palestinian people faced. Abbas will meet with President Sezer, Parliament Speaker Arinc, Foreign Minister Gul, and the main opposition leader Baykal on Monday, and meet with Prime Minister Erdogan, Turkish businessmen, and the press on Tuesday. Sabah says that Abbas will sign an agreement for financial aid to Palestine. The aid will be controlled by Abbas, not by the Hamas government. Abbas might hold a meeting with

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Secretary Rice on Monday, Sabah says.

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Secretary Rice Due in Ankara

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All papers report over the weekend and today that during her call on Ankara on Tuesday, Secretary Rice will discuss Iran, but will not ask the Turks for air bases to use in operations. Turks will tell Rice to wait and see the outcome of diplomatic efforts regarding Iran, urging the American side to seek legitimacy prior to a military operation. Rice will urge Turkey to refrain from moves aimed at easing international pressure on Tehran. Rice is expected to say that the US was cooperating with Turkey by sharing intelligence information, but that no military action against the PKK would be possible for the time being. Rice will also stress that Hamas is a terrorist organization, but is expected to note that Turkey had given the right messages to Hamas during the Palestinian group's Ankara visit. Foreign Minister Gul is expected to tell Secretary Rice that it was Turkey's responsibility to work

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for a peaceful settlement on the crisis with Iran, stressing that Turkey has been telling Tehran that its policies are wrong. Gul will defend the meetings Turks held with Hamas, saying that they were necessary to block the radical group from further radicalization. Gul will also stress that Turkey's patience was running out on the PKK, and that all options for eliminating the terrorist threat would be considered if the US does not take the necessary measures to crush the terrorist organization. The Turks and Americans are expected discuss Iraq and Cyprus as well. Turkey appreciates US efforts to help ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, but expects Washington to do more, say papers.

Tufan Turenc, commenting in Hurriyet has low expectations for the visit: "It is very unlikely that there will be a tangible result from the Rice visit. The US and Turkey currently have different agenda priorities. The Bush

administration is obsessively dealing with Iran as an immediate priority. From Turkey's angle, the US has no chance of gaining sympathy from Turkish people unless it keeps its promises regarding the PKK. The US should either solve the PKK problem on its own or should let Turkey handle it. This is the clear fact that the US administration should face."

Washington-based Ali Aslan, writing Islamist-opinion maker Zaman, wants Secretary Rice to bring the issues of human rights and democracy back to the agenda with Turkey: "Washington has always pursued a double standard when it comes to controversial figures. Washington expresses discontent when certain countries' behavior serves its interests, and keeps a strategic silence when it does not. This policy has also been applied to Turkey. The anti-democratic structure was ignored by Washington during the entire cold war era. The Bush administration is still maintaining a strategic silence on Turkey's internal affairs related to undemocratic practices. Let's hope that Dr. Rice, during her Ankara visit, brings up human rights and democracy issues which have been off the bilateral agenda for a long time. "

Washington-based Milliyet columnist Yasemin Congar believes that the Rice visit will provide an opportunity for Ankara and Washington to "enhance the bilateral dialogue about the future of Iraq and also will create a chance to harmonize bilateral rhetoric on the Iran issue." However, Congar warns "Rice should not be expected to express support for Turkey's intention to conduct a cross border operation in northern Iraq. She is not going to give a green light for that. Even though the US has been more vocal regarding

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comprehensive cooperation against PKK, this does not mean a brand new radical step will be taken. The US will not approve a cross border operation by Turkey in Iraq which would take place despite Baghdad and Barzani's opposition."

TV News
(NTV, 8.00 a.m.)

Domestic News

- More than 600 barrels containing toxic waste have been removed from ground in Tuzla near Istanbul.

- Six terror suspects, including a foreigner, have been captured in the southeastern city of Gaziantep. The suspects, believed to have links with al-Qaida, were reportedly preparing for bomb attacks in the city.

International News

- Shiite Hawad al-Maliki has been appointed the new prime minister in Iraq, ending months of sectarian disagreement in the formation of a new cabinet. President Bush said he told Iraq's new leaders that they had a responsibility to unite the country and that the new government was an important US milestone. "Democracy in Iraq will set a powerful example for people and for the world who are desperate for freedom," Bush said.

- Time Magazine claims ahead of this week's UN Security Council deadline for Tehran to suspend its nuclear program, US officials have been busy planning political and economic sanctions on Iran.

- Osama bin Ladin, in a new audiotape aired by al-Jazeera, called on Muslim fighters to go to Sudan to fight against "crusader thieves".

- Greek President Papoulias said Turkey's EU accession might be blocked if Ankara declines to abide by the European criteria.

- Turkish businessman Muhammed Fethi is reported to have

been killed in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk. The report has not yet been confirmed by the Turkish embassy in Baghdad or by the Foreign Ministry in Ankara.

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